THE

RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF PHILADELPHIA

DURING THE FIRST DECADE

UNDER THE

FEDERAL CONSTITUTION

1790–1800

BY

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PHILADELPHIA
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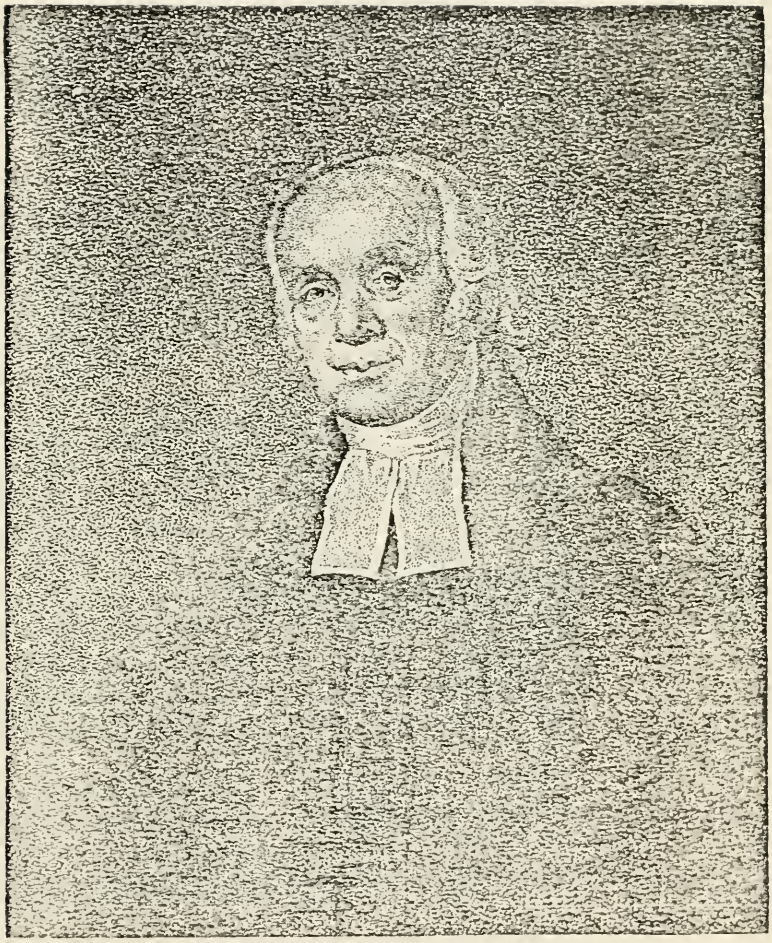

REV JUST. H. CHRISTIAN HELMUTH, D. D.
Nat. Helmstadt, May 16, 1745. Ob. Philadelphia, February 5, 1825.

THE RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF PHILADELPHIA DURING THE FIRST DECADE OF THE FEDERAL CONSTITUTION.

During the closing decade of the eighteenth century, the splendid organization of the German Lutheran Church in Philadelphia, then the capital city, was the great bulwark against which the wave of French atheism and native infidelity dashed itself into harmless spray, to resurge and become lost in the ocean of oblivion.

The writer will now attempt to prove this claim by portraying some of the religious, social and moral conditions of the capital city during the first ten years of the Federal Constitution, amplified by quotations from cotemporary authorities, both written and printed.

This period was one of political and religious unrest, which fortunately has no parallel in the history of our country. It was marked by an opposition to all vested authority and power, whether of state or church, whose aim it was to break down every moral and religious barrier, thus bringing about a condition which to us at the present day seems almost incomprehensible.

The rancour of the printed accusations and recriminations, in pamphlet and broadside, the vituperation and blasphemous tone of the daily press, was so great that it even overshadows the scurrilous yellow journalism of the present day.

The influx of a foreign population, who were the natural enemy of all that was German, a people of whom Dr. Helmuth has well said, "who have attempted to destroy and overthrow all religion wherever they may be," added to the heterogeneous population of the capital city, soon made their baneful

influence felt, as they joined forces with the infidelity, rationalism, universalism, and all other isms that were then promulgated in Philadelphia, and opposed to the orthodox faiths, order and authority.

Philadelphia, as is well known, was the capital of the United States for ten years, from 1790 to 1800. It was only after a sharp political discussion that this result was reached, and after this act of Congress became known, the city at once became the Mecca, as it were, for all the adventurers in the country, and, to make matters worse, who were ere long reinforced by similar characters from abroad.

Philadelphia proper at that time extended from Vine street to South street, and westward from the river to Fifth street. The greater part of this space, especially near the river, was densely built up, the blocks being honeycombed by a network of narrow thoroughfares and alleys, with houses chiefly two stories and an attic, each house sheltering several families. As the population increased this section became even more congested, as will appear later on.

There were but few houses west of Sixth street, and most of these were on Chestnut and Market streets, and of the better or more pretentious class.

Beyond Twelfth street the country was open commons or pasture fields.

Fifth street was really the western boundary of the city proper, and here were located the different graveyards as sufficiently out of town. Thus at Cherry street we have the two Lutheran burial grounds; diagonally opposite, at the northwest corner of Arch, the Presbyterian ground; at the southeast corner of the same streets the Episcopal ground; a square further down, just below Market street, we have the resting place of the Sabbatarian Baptists, while below Walnut street we have the consecrated ground of the Catholic church upon the east side, with the burial place of the Free Quakers upon the west side of Fifth street.

Another interesting fact is, that there was no church nor house of worship further west than St. Michael's, at the corner of Fifth and Appletree alley.

In 1790 the population of the city of Philadelphia proper was 28,522 souls, over a third of which were Germans or their descendants. Assuming this calculation to be correct, we have a third of the city's population owing fealty to two denominations, viz: the Lutheran and Reformed churches. It is true there were also German Moravians and Roman Catholics, but these were so greatly in the minority as to preclude any consideration in our present calculation.

The remainder of the population, consisting chiefly of the English inhabitants, were divided up religiously among the churchmen or Episcopalians, Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, Catholic (Irish), Quakers, Universalists, Infidels, Socinians, Atheists, Deists, and other "ists."

Of the churches in the city in 1790 the Churchmen had three; Presbyterians and Catholics each had two; Baptists one; Methodists one. In addition there was also an African church. This shows how the greater part of the inhabitants were divided and scattered upon the religious question.

The Germans had a total of four churches and one synagogue—two Lutheran churches belonging to a united congregation, and one each Calvinist, Moravian house of worship. The German Lutheran Zion church was the largest and finest house of worship in North America, with a seating capacity far in excess of any other in the city, and so great was the preponderance of the German Lutherans, with their splendid organization, large congregations and learned clergy, and firm faith, that at that time the church stood alone, among all the other denominations, as a firm rock against which the sea of unbelief had no power.

With the advent of the Federal Government there followed an immediate increase of the population.

Places for the sale of intoxicating liquors multiplied, gambling houses were opened, and halls of vice of every description sought the fertile soil of the Federal city.

Religious unrest also made itself manifest at an early day. Thus a Deistic society was formed under the leadership of John Fitch. Meetings were first held in a room in Church alley, but on account of the opposition of Bishop William

White upon the part of the English, and of Dr. Helmuth upon the part of the Germans, no person could be found willing to rent them a room, and the society of the "Age of Reason" was soon suppressed.

More fortunate were the Universalists, under Moses Winchester, who secured the old Masons Hall on Lodge Alley and there, in May, 1790, adopted articles of faith as a "Universal Baptist Society."

The "True Christian Church" (New Jerusalem or Swedenborgian) was also organized about this time, among the subscribers being Robert Morris and Thomas McKean.

It was mainly due to the dissensions then so rife among the English churches that these new movements and schisms originated and gained strength.

It was not long after the city became the seat of Federal Government that an influx of emigrants commenced, which was to exert a baneful influence upon our whole social and political economy, and for a time even threaten the stability of our government, going so far as to attempt the impeachment and overthrow of President Washington. I now allude to the arrival of the French Emigrés. The first to arrive were fugitive Royalists. These were soon reinforced by the fugitives from San Domingo, and later by Genet, the representative of the French Republic, and his train of followers.

During the year 1790 the German Lutheran congregation strengthened itself still more by the completion of the great Tannaberg organ; the largest and finest in America. This under the wise management of pastor Helmuth attracted great congregations, among whom were many English and non churchgoers.

The opening of this fine instrument with its multitude of pipes, and beautiful ornamentations, which portrayed the symbol of the Halle institution, together with the special hymns and services, all tended to further unify the German Lutheran congregation, and demonstrate its strength in the community as a bulwark against the growing infidelity of that age.

Lob

und

Anbetung

des Gottmenſchen,

am Tage

der Einweihung der neuen Orgel

in der Deutſchen Evangeliſch Lutheriſchen Zions Kirche in Philadelphia,

den 10 October, 1790.

Germantaun:

Gedruckt bey Michael Billmeyer, 1790.

The people of Philadelphia, excepting the German element, were excited to a high pitch of enthusiasm by the events of the French Revolution, which culminated with the execution of Louis XVI, who had been the firm friend of America during the revolution.

The French Republic was then at war with England, and the sympathy exhibited in the United States naturally aroused the deepest resentment of the British Government. The French in Philadelphia working upon the anti-English feeling of the American populace, soon had not only the lowest strata of the citizen wild with enthusiasm, but they actually turned the heads of some of the most prominent citizens as well.

Then the return of Jefferson from France, strongly impregnated with the advanced views of fraternity and equality, which were being so strongly exploited there, was another important factor, and his great influence was thrown into the scale in favor of the French extremists and Gallic infidelity.

The story of how the French agitators asserted themselves at this time is perhaps best told by a study of the United States coins covering these years.

The first coins struck under the Federal constitution bore the head of George Washington upon the obverse, while the outspread Federal eagle graced the reverse.* Commencing with the coins of 1791-2 we have two varieties for each year of what are known as the Washington pennies. Both of the varieties of 1791 bear the legend "Washington, President." There is, however, a slight difference in the reverse as to the date and eagle. The coins of 1792 also bear a bust of Washington in military costume, one variety bearing the legend "Washington, President," the other "G. Washington, President I." Half dollars of the latter type were also struck.

So great was the objection of the French agitators and

*It was the intention of the writer to reproduce pictures of these coins on the opposite page, but he was informed that this conflicted with the laws of the United States, and would make the whole edition of the REVIEW liable to seizure by the Secret Service officers. Original specimens of these coins can be seen in almost any numismatical collection.

their supporters to this style of coin, as Washington had incurred their displeasure by his firm stand in the interests of law, order and religion, that the next year, 1793, when really the first authorized coins were struck, there was substituted for the head of the President that of a wild-eyed female with flowing hair, streaming and unbound, the French idea of the Goddess of Liberty; upon the reverse, the American eagle was also relegated into obscurity for the time being as savoring too much of a Royal coat of arms, and replaced by a chain of fifteen links; others bore a wreath in place of the chain.

In the year 1794 a different design was substituted. It was a female head, said to be that of the creature enthroned upon the altar at Notre Dame. The tresses were loose and falling below the neck; upon a pole behind the head was a Phrygian liberty cap or "Bonnet Rouge." The whole was surmounted by the legend liberty, the date being below the head. This design gave universal satisfaction to the French element and the foolish adherents. This was continued upon all coins of the United States until the reaction in 1796, when the chaste American conception of liberty appears upon our money. A few of the coins for 1796 were struck off both designs. After 1797 the French head disappeared from the issues of our mint. The American eagle was also brought forth from the obscurity to which it had been temporarily relegated, and appears again in his full majesty and glory upon the coins of the day.

The year 1793 was perhaps the most eventful one during the whole decade. We first have the arrival of citizen Genet and numbers of his followers, followed by a saturnalia of license and revelry which surpassed anything similar witnessed in the city of Brotherly Love before or since.

Secondly, we have the arrival of several thousand French refugees from San Domingo, and, lastly, the terrible visitation of the yellow fever, which seemed to spread itself as a pall over the fated city as a judgment for the sins of the population.

From the moment that the notorious Genet, as Ambassador of the French Republic, crossed at Gray's Ferry and entered Philadelphia May 16, 1793, pandemonium broke loose

in the capital city. Received as he was by some of the leading citizens, feted at the State house, and the demonstrations and attentions he received at the hands of individuals, encouraged the wily Frenchman in his efforts to obtain substantial aid and recognition from the American Government. So great was his effrontery that upon his official presentation to Washington, May 18, 1793, perceiving in the vestibule of the President's residence a bust of Louis XVI, who had been guillotined a few months before, he complained that its retention in such a conspicuous position was an insult to the French Republican Government. A late writer, in commenting upon this incident, says:

"His pretensions, however, as absurd as they may appear "at this day, were in a measure justified by the extravagant at- "tentions which he continued to receive at the hands of the "people of Philadelphia."

There was, however, fortunately, one large class of persons who refused to become "Gallomaniacs," wear French cockades, shout for fraternity and equality, or become infatuated with the French atheism or carried away by Paine's "Rights of Man," or "Age of Reason." These were the despised Dutch, the German Lutherans and Calvinists, under the spiritual charge of Helmuth, Schmidt and Weyberg and Winkhaus.

The English inhabitants were classed as Anglomaniacs, Monocrats and Gallomaniacs. The first were such as opposed any entanglement with England upon French account. The Monocrats were the upholders of Washington, law, order and good government; while the latter party embraced such as were lost to all sense of decency, had renounced their belief in Almighty God, and joined hands with the French rabble in denouncing everything pertaining to moral law and religion."

French vessels arriving in the Delaware added to the number of "citoyen" already in our midst. All of these newcomers were imbued, in addition to the French idea of "equality and fraternity," with the spirit of French atheism of the most modern type. Unfortunately, it was not long before thousands of our citizens became infected not only with the

Gallic craze but with their contempt of all religion as well. How great this craze was may be judged from the fact that the French cockade and tricolor was almost universally worn and displayed by all except the German element.

Many of the most staid Quakers, stiff Presbyterians and courtly churchmen openly sympathized with Genet and displayed the tricolor cockade. French manners and customs ruled the day, and the vices of the Latin became firmly seated in the city on the Delaware. It even had its effect in domestic and social life. Plain Miss Mary Smith for the nonce became Mdle. Marie, Mrs. Betsy Jones was Madame Elise, while plain James Brown became Mons. Jacques. In some cases even the straight cut coat and stiff hat of Friend Broadbrim was discarded for the carmagnole and the chapeau Bras, and henceforth he was Citoyen Broadbrim. Even Governor Mifflin and Chief Justice McKean were known as citizens Mifflin and McKean.

The newspapers of the day were filled with French advertisements—dancing schools, French lessons, fencing academies, pastry shops, French brandy, cosmetics, pomatum and silk stockings and similar subjects, but not a single note of any Christian worship.

The children were instructed in the wild dance and French song known as the Carmagnole, so-called altars of freedom were occasionally set up in public places around which the children and their elders danced and cavorted, and all of this in the Quaker city of Brotherly Love.

To add to the gravity of the situation and strengthen the infidelity rampant in the city, we have the arrival of Volney and the publication of Paine's "Age of Reason," which was at once taken up by the French and their sympathizers.

No efforts were now spared by Genet and his followers to ridicule and break down the most sacred religious observances.

One of the gatherings, at which Gov. Mifflin and other prominent citizens were present, was intended as a travesty of the feast of Herod (Matthew xiv, 6-11). At the head of the table stood a pike bearing a Phrygian cap, and the French and American flags entwined, the whole surmounted by a dove

bearing an olive branch. At the proper time the head of a pig was brought in upon a salver, the liberty cap was taken from the pike and placed upon Genet's head, who then made a stab at the pig's head. This act was repeated in succession by Gov. Mifflin and all present, the cap being first placed upon each person's head.

This wave of unbelief and blasphemy became so universal in the capital city, whereof Dr. Helmuth tells us "that at times hardly one-fourth of all the numerous inhabitants of the city would vouchsafe to hear the call of the Lord, much less suffer themselves to be gathered under his wings."

Now what was done to counteract this situation? The condition of the English churches has already been touched upon. It was left to the German Lutheran Church to stand firm and bear almost the whole of the brunt of the battle. (The Reformed Church having suffered a great loss by the deaths of Rev. Dr. C. D. Weyberg and Rev. J. H. Winkhaus.)

The Lutheran congregation opened its doors, and by the aid of special services strove to attract not only the German population, but the English of all sorts and conditions as well. The grand organ and the singing society organized by pastor Helmuth were utilized, and musical services arranged, which at different times were graced with the presence of President Washington, his wife and official family, as well as the whole Congress of the United States, the Legislature of Pennsylvania and the city government, all of which was intended to check the unhealthy notions of the day, and keep alive the spirit of true religion in our midst.

I will here say, as a matter of fact, that there was no greater thorn in the side of the French atheists and Gallomaniacs than these successful services in Zion church. No epithet was too vile for them to heap upon the despised Dutch and their church. The printing press was another great power employed by the German Lutheran clergy to combat the infidelity of the time. The church made free use of this medium, and in fact may be said to have had one under its control. I will say that Dr. Helmuth in his efforts to diffuse Christian

thought and knowledge was ably seconded by the Germantown printer, Michael Bilmeyer.

Let us give you a synopsis of the issues of his press during the three years which have been under our consideration:

1790.

(1) An appendix to the hymnbook of the United Evangelical Lutheran congregations in North America, containing Luther's smaller catechism, Gospels and Epistles, etc., with prayers. A 12mo. of 80 pp.

Lieder.

Philadelphia, 1790.

Liebe Kinder,

Verſchiedene Glieder unſerer Lutheriſchen Gemeinde, die euch recht lieb haben, machen euch mit dieſem Büchlein ein Geſchenk, damit ihr euch immer mehr im Singen üben, und bey dem Hierſeyn ſo vieler fremden Lehrer recht aufmerkſam und artig in der Kirche, wie auch ſonſt überhaupt wahre fromme Kinder ſeyn möget.

[TITLE PAGE TO CHILDREN'S HYMN BOOK.]

(2) Divers Christian Prayers 16mo. pp. 163.

(3) Praise and adoration of the God-man. Issued upon the occasion of the dedication of the great Tannaberg organ.

1791.

(4) Evidences of the goodness of God in the German Evangelical Lutheran congregation in Philadelphia. 12mo. 36 pp.

1792.

(5) A well-arranged A B C spelling and reading book for use in the German schools.

1793.

(6) A consideration of the Evangelical teachings of the Holy writ and baptism, together with some thoughts regarding the present times by Rev. Dr. Helmuth. This was a 12mo. of 336 pp., of which 6 were preface.

In addition to those just enumerated we have in 1790:

(7) High-German Lutheran A B C and name-book.

(8) Johann Haberman's Christian morning and evening prayers. A 16mo. of 216 pages, both from the press of Peter Leibert, of Germantown,

In the next year there was issued:

(9) An entire new arranged Lutheran A B C spelling and word-book for the useful service in German schools. Samuel Sauer, of Chestnut Hill, was the printer

(10) Teerstegen's spiritual flower garden of intimate souls. A 12mo. of 534 pp. by Peter Leibert & Son.

(11) A smaller catechism of Martin Luther.

(12) A new edition of the New Testament both from the press of Carl Cist, in Philadelphia, while Melchior Steiner printed

(13) Rev. Dr. Kunze's new translation of the 119th Psalm.

We now come to the most tragic feature of the eventful year of 1793. This was a visitation of the yellow fever. The number of deaths from the deadly scourge from August 1 to November 9 numbered about 5000, of which 625 are credited to the German Lutheran, St. Michael's and Zion congrega-

tions. Appalling as this great loss appears, neither the clergy nor congregation became disheartened. During the whole of this horrid epidemic regular services were held in the large Zion church every Sunday and during the week, with Dr. Helmuth in the pulpit.

This is but another instance in which the German Lutheran church, of Philadelphia, can claim a credit beyond that of any other denomination.

Editorials and communications denouncing these services were published in the daily papers, wherein the charge was openly made, as the distemper spread and increased in violence, that the Dutch Lutherans and their church were responsible for the spread of the contagion. Public and private efforts were made by the English and French who remained in the fated city to close the Dutch Lutheran church. Threats were even made to break up the meetings by force or burn the church.

This is not to be wondered at when we consider that some of the most devout and intelligent people in the city urged a suspension of religious services under the fear that assemblages of many people spread the contagion.

By a strange anomaly this rule did not seem to apply to taverns, infidel meetings or theatrical performances, public vendues and celebrations of French victories or anniversaries.

Now how was all of this tumult and violent outcry met by the Lutheran church and clergy?

Firstly. Dr. Helmuth asked his opposers to give him any Bible authority for their demands to discontinue public religious worship in times of sore distress.

In his answer to such as assailed him in public print he said, in part:

"We know that the Lord dwells with such really contrite souls particularly then, when they unite in a church or in any other house for his worship; for has he not said:

The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwelling places of Jacob.

Has not our blessed Saviour given this promise: Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst

of them. Has he not called to us through his apostle: Let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together. He further challenged them to show whether there had been any exception made in any part of Scripture with respect to sickness, or the time of the plague."

Secondly. As to the sanitary measures taken by the church to prevent contagion we will again let Dr. Helmuth tell his own story:

"Very soon in the beginning of the disorder we left off our evening prayers, as we thought that they might perhaps be hurtful on account of the evening air; and because many would perhaps not change their clothes in the evening which they had worn all day in sick rooms.

"We fixed our meetings in the morning, and we came together in our large church and no longer in the small one, as being too near the graveyard.

"This roomy building was opened long before the time of meeting, in order that the fresh morning air might pervade it; afterwards all the doors and windows were shut and a strong smoke of juniper berries and nitre was made throughout the whole house. Then the people gathered. When all were met, many or few, or perhaps all of the windows and doors were opened, according as the weather required.

"Those who had sick people at home, or did not feel well themselves, were particularly requested not to come to our meetings; all who attended were advised to sit as far apart as the numbers of the hearers would permit. The service itself lasted seldom longer than half or three-quarters of an hour.

"In our discourses we did not confine ourselves to truths concerning salvation, but frequently interspersed other necessary matters according to circumstances. Among these we reckon:

"A recommendation of certain necessary and harmless preservatives.

"A caution against all that might be hurtful and might promote the infection, such as intemperance in eating and

drinking, uncleanliness of dress and body, immoderate use of strong liquors, catching cold, overheating, fatigue, etc.

"We preached, moreover, Jesus, the friend of the poor sinner; the ready and almighty physician and assistant in the greatest distress; we tried to vanish all excessive fear out of the minds of our hearers, and inspire them with courage and confidence in God."

It was Matthew Carey, a prominent Roman Catholic writer and publisher, who said after the distemper was over: "That he hoped that the awful lesson the congregation had received by a mortality out of all proportion to their numbers should serve as a memento at all future times, in like critical emergencies." Yet of the pastor he was forced to give the following tribute:

"The Rev. Henry Helmuth's merits are of the most exalted kind. His whole time, during the prevalence of the disorder, was spent in the performance of the works of mercy, visiting and relieving the sick, comforting the afflicted, and feeding the hungry. Of his congregation some hundreds have paid the last debt to nature since the malignant fever began; and I believe he attended nearly the whole of them. To so many dangers was he exposed that he stands a living miracle of preservation."

As an instance of how inhumanly the Germans were treated by the English during this period, and of how little value their precious lives were held to be, I will illustrate with two examples:

During the epidemic most vessels came no nearer to the city than Fort Mifflin. Such as came from the West Indies were forced to stop there.

Vessels with German emigrants, however, were brought boldly up to the city, and the passengers publicly advertised and sold as servants in the fever-stricken city—numbers of them to become inmates of the Bush Hill Hospital before many hours had passed and thence carried out to a pauper's grave. The excuse for such action was that they were only "Dutch Redemptioners."

Isaac Weld tells us of such a captain in the trade who ar-

rived in the river October 4, 1793, and hearing that such was the fatal nature of the infection that a sufficient number of nurses could not be procured to attend the sick for any sum whatsoever, he conceived the philanthropic idea of supplying this deficiency from amongst his German passengers. Accordingly be boldly sailed up to the city, and advertised his cargo for sale:

"A few healthy servants, generally between 17 and 18 "years of age, are just arrived in the Brig Polly. Their times "will be disposed of by applying on board."

The cargo did not remain long unsold.

A reference to the papers of the day will show that this was not an isolated case, as there were five vessels which arrived during the epidemic with German passengers.

Advertisements like the following were not uncommon:

GERMAN REDEMPTIONERS

arrived in the Ship Columbia, William Malery Master from Amsterdam, a number of German Redemptioners, among which are Farmers, Forgemen, Carpenters, Tailors, Shoemakers, Girls and Boys, whose time will be disposed of. Enquire at said ship. September 24, 1793.

Eighty-eight passengers were thus disposed of from the ship Columbia alone. This was when the distemper was at its height.

That the church quickly recovered itself after the dread visitation was largely due to the course pursued during the trouble, and is plainly shown by the communicant list. Thus in 1792 we have 1082 communicants; 1793, 973, and in 1794, 1114.

During the latter part of 1793 a large number of French refugees arrived from San Domingo. These were joined by hundreds of others from the West Indies and from France. This influx continued during the year 1794. The French refugees appeared to look upon Philadelphia as an ark of safety like that of Noah.

By the time spring opened our population was increased by several thousand French Constitutionalists, Conventionalists, Thermidorians, Fructidorians, etc., with a goodly sprink-

ling of clericals, among whom was Talleyrand, Bishop of Autun.

The visitation of the plague was soon forgotten. Philadelphia once again had the appearance of the wicked French metropolis. French manners and vices were aped by the Americans, both male and female. Clubs were formed, such as the "Sons of Midnight Frolic," etc. Staid men could be seen walking the streets with hats under their arms, instead of upon their heads, simply because it was French. Women of respectability powdered their hair, used cosmetics and patches and wore the tricolor, following the example set by the outcasts in our midst.

Gambling at the stock exchange also became common with both sexes, as did other games of chance. Cursing, swearing in French and English, licentiousness and perjury, had fixed their residence here, and one needed only to walk the streets on Saturday evenings or Sundays, in particular, to hear the most horrid imprecations from men, women and youth. Well could the pastor exclaim, as he stood in Zion's pulpit: "Oh! Philadelphia! Philadelphia! how often would thy Jesus have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldst not!" Atheism and infidelity were now again the ruling elements and no effort appears to have been made by the French clericals to hold any religious worship.

As to the Bishop of Autun many stories are current of how he failed to preserve his ecclesiastical character when he was outside of the pale of the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Catholic church. He even made efforts, while in Philadelphia, to extend the slave trade with the West Indies.

His course in Philadelphia is best told by an entry in the diary of the Chevalier de Pontgibaud, who had been aid to La Fayette:

"The Bishop of Autun, who had been requested to 'get out' of England, has established himself in the free land of America. Messieur wore a pig tail and would willingly have said, as Abbe Raynal did, 'When I was a priest.' He is not at all troubled about his present condition, and still less about

his future; he speculates and laughs at everything and everybody. M. de Talleyrand had the right, if it pleased him, to pull off his clerical gown and trail it in the mud, but he had also at that time a position as a French Emigré, and though he might resign for himself the welcome bestowed upon unfortunate people in that position, he also indirectly injures others. . . . The Bishop of Autun having peculiar ideas as to the rights of man and confidence in the unbounded liberty to be found in the new world. He might be seen walking the streets of Philadelphia, in open day, with a negro woman on his arm. Pontgibaud, adds, This was a gratuitous insult to the manners and customs which prevail in the country."

I am glad to be able to say that the doors of President Washington were closed to such individuals as Talleyrand, Noailles, Duportail and Volney.

Further, if at any time the question were asked as to what was the greatest triumvirate of our early Federal history, who upheld law, order and religion in a most critical period, when our institutions were assailed and every effort made to unseat them, when the scroll of fame was unrolled for an answer, it would be found to bear the names in burnished gold of PRESIDENT WASHINGTON, BISHOP WILLIAM WHITE, and last, but not least, pastor HELMUTH, of the German Lutheran Church.

Vice President John Adams, writing home of this critical period, says:

"Ten thousand people in the streets of Philadelphia day "after day, threatened to drag Washington out of his house "and effect a revolution in the Government or compel it to de- "clare in favor of the French Revolution and against Eng- "land."

To what a terrible state the city had fallen while in the grasp of the French Emigrés is best illustrated by an impious travesty inaugurated by Genet and his followers of one of the church's most holy sacraments, which was not only intended to ridicule an act of the church, but at the same time to show their dislike to the president.

A printed account tells us that these sittings were im-

piously likened to a communion. Genet instituted the sacraments of his order—not in bread and wine—but in pig and wine. The head of the poor animal, severed with a cleaver, and elevated upon the head of a large fork, was given by him and passed from hand to hand around the table; and a libation of wine was, at the name of Washington, dashed down the throat of the poor pig's head.

While this cloud of infidelity and blasphemy hung over our city, which pastor Helmuth called a "disorder far above the poison of the real plague," the church had gone steadily onward in its work. The year had passed without any recurrence of the dreaded fever. Matters had recovered and Zion was again crowded.

Great were the preparations made for the celebration of the Christmas festival of 1794. It was to be a joyous feast of thanksgiving. The church was dressed in holiday attire, garlands of evergreen were festooned from pillar to pillar, wreaths of laurel graced the galleries, festoons of holly brightened the walls, while verdant garniture enhanced the bright scarlet and gold hangings of pulpit and altar. Extra hymns were composed, special music was arranged and the tones of the grand organ, as the swell rose and fell, all added to the solemnity of the festival. Never since the church was built was there a more joyous service, and much had the congregation to be thankful for. The clergy had been miraculously spared. During all the troublous times the services were never interrupted. Infidel clamor, French wrath or sectional opposition had all failed to affect the congregation.

Although the losses by death had been greater in proportion than any other church, yet it had rallied in the face of all outward attack and opposition. In spite of all the membership and communicant list had increased. Well could the two pastors congratulate themselves. During all of these trials and times of sore distress the German Lutheran Church in Philadelphia had proven itself a rock against which all unbelief dashed itself into harmless spray.

The Christmas services of this year were destined to be the final ones in this grand temple of Zion. A short service

was held on the second Christmas day, Friday, December 26, 1794. This was over by twelve o'clock, when the church was closed.

Well might pastors Helmuth and Schmidt congratulate themselves, and give thanks for the successful issue of the celebration, the musical feature of which was to be repeated upon the following Sunday. All thus far had gone well. The night opened cold, crisp and clear; the streets were crowded with roysterers, usual to a semi-holiday—when suddenly—it was shortly after seven o'clock—a cry of fire was heard in Cherry street below the church. The fire proved to be in the sacristry or lower room of the church tower. The alarm was quickly responded to and bucket lines formed from pump to church. The window sash was broken and bucket after bucket of water was poured upon the fire. After half an hour's hard work the fire was thought to be extinguished, and the Germans congratulated themselves that the damage was confined to the tower and that the church was saved.

Vain, however, were the hopes. No sooner was it thought that the danger was over than smoke was seen to issue from under the roof of the church proper. Now the wail and cry went forth, *"Die Kirche! Die Zion's Kirche brennet!"* A renewed alarm was given. Loud clanged the bells calling the citizens to the scene. As soon as it was found that the church proper was ablaze, strenuous efforts were made to save the great organ. Fortunately the greater part of the mechanism was removed to a place of safety before the falling embers forced the people to vacate the building for their own safety.

As soon as the cry went forth that Zion church was afire, every able person of German descent—men, women and children—irrespective of church connections, hastened to the scene with buckets, pails, and fire buckets. Lines were formed of hundreds, even thousands, or more persons from the various pumps to the fire and buckets of water passed from hand to hand. The men did the pumping, working the crude fire engines and throwing the water on the fire. The strong women and boys passed the full buckets, while the weaker ones and girls returned the empty ones to the source of supply.

While these efforts were made by the Germans to save their beloved Zion, a rabble of thousands of French and infidels had also gathered who, though strong and able-bodied, refused to aid in the passing of water or manning the levers of the engines; and, sad to say, they tried to break the lines of the passers so as to insure the destruction of the church.

If old tradition is true, many a Frenchman during that eventful night received the contents of a German matron's fire bucket over his head as they attempted to interfere with the water supply. Hundreds of others stood idly by, while some more, bolder than the rest, attempted by force to prevent any salvage of property.

Great was the joy of this rabble at the burning of the grand temple of Zion. Cheers, vivats and hurrahs went up loud and strong as every renewed burst of flame shot forth and ensured the doom of the building, and finally as the roof fell and a shower of flame and sparks shot skyward, a mighty shout went up as it was thought that that would be the end of the "Dutch Lutheran Church."

During the fire a sketch of the scene was made by Paul Reiche, a member of the congregation. This was a crude drawing. It was sketched from the roof of a house on the west side of Fourth street above Cherry. The drawing was afterwards engraved, but it appears that but few were printed, and at the present time but a single copy is known. There is a facsimile of this in my hand at this writing. Crude as it is, you will easily make out the lines of women passing the buckets, with a single engine trying to throw a stream into the building. Also the turbulent crowd in front of the church with their backs to the fire, trying to break up the lines and prevent the Germans from fighting the fire.

It was two o'clock in the morning when pastor Helmuth sought his couch. We can imagine how heavy his heart was. What a few hours ago had been the grandest house of worship in America was now a heap of blazing cinders, with blackened walls rearing their ghostly outlines against midnight sky.

Amidst this awful scene of destruction there was one bright star—one gleam of endearing sympathy, one exhibition

of brotherly love and charity, which far overshadowed the loud vivats and cheers of the rabble over the destruction of the church.

While the church was yet burning—it was during the midnight hour—the officers of the German Reformed congregation on Race street came in a body to pastors Helmuth and Schmidt and offered them the use of their church on alternate Sundays.

Undisguised was the joy of the infidel rabble at the burning of the "Dutch Lutheran" Church, as they called it, as it was not supposed that the poor Dutch could rebuild their great church. There was no insurance to collect, no funds to draw upon in the treasury. Further to prevent subscriptions from the English residents, the charge was publicly made that the fire was the result of a political meeting held in the church under the auspices of the German Republican Club, that the church was, in reality, a mere political club house. This charge was even republished in New York papers. The slander, however, was soon refuted. Objections to any rebuilding of the church were also made in public print.

Now what effect did all of this clamor and misfortune have upon the congregation? The very next day after the fire, arrangements were made looking towards a speedy rebuilding of the German Zion. The walls were found to be uninjured, so the following appeal was prepared and inserted in the newspapers of January 1, 1795:

"The late unfortunate destruction by fire of one of the largest and most elegant buildings appropriated for divine service in this city, cannot but have struck with sympathy the members of all religious societies, whose places of worship are equally exposed to similar disasters. The German Lutherans, who are the immediate sufferers, with a zeal becoming the importance of the occasion, have resolved to exert every nerve for the speedy re-establishment of their own place of worship. Conscious, however, of the too frequent habits of applying for subscriptions which are by many considered as unequal and improper burdens upon private munificence, they are not inclined personally to apply to any individuals out of the limits of their own society; yet, as the expence must be considerable, and assistance of course acceptable from all who may be induced voluntarily to contribute, they have appointed John Steinmetz, Esq., of Philadelphia, their present Treasurer, in Market street, between Fifth and Sixth streets, No. 228, to receive any donation great or small, which the liberal may be disposed to offer for the rebuilding of this temple, dedicated to the honor and praise of

a common Saviour. Such donations will also be received with equal gratitude by any of the clergy and members of the corporation of said church.

Henry Kepple, Sen.,	Henry Kammerer,
Andrew Boshart,	Conrad Haas,
Fr. A. Muhlenberg, Esq.,	Martin Baish,
George Leib,	Baltes Emrich,
Peter Kraft,	John Hay,
Andrew Geyer,	Caspar Snyder,
Geo. Forepaugh,	George Kitts,
Geo. Honey,	John Nagle.
John N Wagner,	Daniel Miller,
Jacob Eckfeld,	Geo. Bastian.
Lawrence Herbert,	

Since the foregoing was written, the corporation have with the most heartfelt satisfaction understood, that there are certain gentlemen in Philadelphia who have generously undertaken to collect subscriptions for the above purpose in their respective congregations. This publication is by no means meant to interfere with their very laudable and affectionate undertaking. Those only are meant to be included in it who are not members of those societies where the above mentioned gentlemen belong to.

At the same time those persons who have been kind enough, at the late fire, to take into their care any articles belonging to the congregation of the Lutheran Church, are kindly requested to deliver the same to either of the above named gentlemen; in particular, any articles belonging to the organ, such as pipes, &c., &c.

A subscription blank was also printed by Billmeyer and circulated among all Germans, similar to the one shown here:

Da es dem allmächtigen Gott gefallen, die Evangelisch-Lutherische Gemeine, in seiner heiligen und weisen Regierung, mit dem Verlust ihrer Kirche heimzusuchen; so achten wir uns nach der Christlichen Bruderliebe verbunden, ihnen bey Wiederaufbauung derselben mit einer milden Gabe beyzustehen:

Wir, Unterschriebene, erklären demnach hiermit, daß wir die bey unsern Namen stehende Summen zwischen hier und dem Ersten July dieses Jahrs an Herrn richtig bezahlen wollen.

Philadelphia, den 5ten Jenner, 1795.

Among the first persons to call on Dr. Helmuth and offer sympathy were Bishop William White and Dr. Benjamin Rush, they at the same time handing over a substantial contribution towards the building fund. If the writer mistakes not,

the sum was £84. Tradition also tells us that President Washington made a substantial donation. No documentary proof, however, has been found thus far by the writer to verify this tradition.

While these successful efforts were being made by the congregation to rebuild, their infidel enemies were far from idle in trying to hamper the work. All sorts of rumors and charges were printed and circulated derogatory and against the "Dutch Lutherans."

To silence these defamers the Rev. and Hon. Frederick Augustus Muhlenberg, at the request of the congregation, prepared a concise sketch of the Lutheran Church in Philadelphia, from the earliest days to the burning of Zion. This sketch was offered to all city papers for publication. It appeared, however, in but a single paper, and this one by no means the most prominent or influential.

It is not within the scope of this paper to reproduce this long-forgotten and almost unknown sketch of the German Lutheran Church. It will, I trust, be reprinted in full in the LUTHERAN CHURCH REVIEW at some future day.

Notwithstanding all discouragements and opposition the work of rebuilding went steadily on. Another noteworthy fact in this connection, is that the new church was reared from its ashes without the use of any rum, or at least there was none furnished the workmen by the corporation.

So rapidly did the work progress, and so Phœnix like did the German Zion rise from its ashes, that just twenty-three months later, Sunday, November 27, 1796, the first service was held in the new church, when it was rededicated to its sacred uses.

We have here a pamphlet giving the hymns sung, which were all specially composed for the occasion. The title tells us that:

"Upon this day assembled the members of the German "Evangelical Lutheran Church in Philadelphia, again for the "first time in the Zion Church for divine worship, after it had "been on the 26th day of December, 1794, unfortunately con-"sumed by fire."

The first hymn on the program was a tribute to the German Reformed congregation, who had stood so nobly by the church in the days of her sore distress.

A free translation of the two last stanzas will illustrate this brotherly feeling:

"Frightened birds were they
The members of our church, like unto
Yet 'Hail the Sister.' She called us
Unto herself, with warm compassion tender.

"She took us cheerfully into her abode,
We supplicate; Lord bless her!—be thou
Recompenser of this beautiful deed
For many, many years yet to come."

The new building differed greatly from the original in its interior arrangement. It was, however, argued that the church was lighter, with a seating capacity largely increased.

We of the present day can form but little idea of the sturdy efforts made by clergy and congregation of the German church to overcome the great obstacles incident to the time. A brighter day, however, was dawning. The arrogance of the French in their demands at last became unbearable. The best classes of the American population were again coming to their senses. The firm, unbroken course of the united German Lutheran congregation, the overcoming of all obstacles and difficulties, made themselves manifest and had their effect upon the English churches and the community at large. Church attendance increased; yet there was an immense amount of the infidel leaven left in the community. To further overcome this evil the school system of the German church was extended. A large school was established by the corporation in the Northern Liberties, which formed the nucleus of the present St. Paulus Church, a large and prosperous congregation.

A school for girls was also established on Fourth street, just below the church. Every effort was made to reach the youth of both sexes and lead them in the path of the church. To make these schools attractive, singing was taught and instruction given in music.

Even church extension was not neglected during the trying times through which the congregation had just passed, as is instanced in the founding of St. Paulus, in 1796. A society was also incorporated to assist the poor. This, I think, still exists.*

At this time (1796) we find the first evidences of services in Philadelphia for the French Catholics. It is said they were chiefly attended by women and children. These were held in the new Trinity church by a faithful priest, Rene Houdet, who in the same year published in French, "A Treatise on Morality, Chiefly Designed for Instruction of Youth," a work that was later translated into English.

Let me once again refer to the bibliography of this period. From the year 1794 to the close of the century the speaker has found no less than seventeen books printed in Philadelphia and Germantown in the interest of the Lutheran church. Of this number Michael Billmeyer printed five, Steiner and Kammere six, Peter Leibert three, Schweitzer two, and Carl Cist one.

Among these titles we find:

(1) "The Brotherly Love in Philadelphia Towards Their Poor Brethren." An address by pastor Helmuth held February 3, 1794. 8 vo. 10 pp.

(2) An address by Frederic August Muhlenberg held September 20, 1794.

(3) A second edition of the Billmeyer Hymnbook of 1786. A 12mo. of 602 pp.

(4) A printed address by Christian Endress, of Zion church. 8 vo. 12 pp.

(5) Rules of the society for the support and aid of aged, poor and infirm members of the German Evangelical Lutheran congregation. 8 vo. 12 pp.

(6) A Lutheran primer.

(7) A smaller catechism of Dr. M. Luther.

(8) A second edition of the Marburg Hymnbook. 12mo. 262 pp.

*This association is still in existence. The grandfather of the Editor of the REVIEW was its secretary for many years.

As reason gradually asserted itself, French and infidel influence waned. The story is best told by another reference to the coins of our country. In 1796 a new obverse appeared. It was a chaste female head with bosom draped and hair bound with a ribbon. It was the American personification of Liberty without license. During this year there were a few coins struck off the old pattern as well as of the new, showing that some of the French influence still lingered in our midst. In the following year (1797), however, we have but a single head upon our silver coins. When finally the breach with France was complete and war declared in 1798, our good old American eagle was again brought forth from its obscurity, and we find him in all his majesty upon the reverse of our silver coins, with olive branch in one claw and the arrows of war in the other. Francis Hopkinson's national hymn, "Hail Columbia," set to the tune of the "President's March," could be publicly sung, and finally replaced the Marseillaise hymn and other French airs. Adams was elected President, Jefferson was defeated and now infidelity and atheism was crushed under foot.

How much of this great victory was due to the pastors and corporation of the German Lutheran Church in the then capital city I leave to the reader for consideration. I have presented my case to the best of my ability, and told my story as impartially as I could. If you will take the trouble to look up the authorities and contemporary literature you will soon find that my picture was neither overdrawn nor over-colored, and it will soon become evident that not half has been told. I trust from the evidence here presented that you will agree with the writer, that, during that most trying period from 1790 to the close of the century, the German Lutheran congregation in Philadelphia was the great and firm power of defence against which neither the infidelity of the day, nor the atheism of the French could prevail.

JULIUS F. SACHSE.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, July, 1901.